

WHAT IS BIT?

THE BIENNIAL INSPECTION OF TERMINALS

The California Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1988, commonly referred to as the Biennial Inspection of Terminals (BIT) Program, was enacted by the California Legislature in an effort to alleviate the growing number of truck related collisions on California's highways. Primarily, the intent is to ensure every truck terminal throughout the state is inspected by the CHP on a regular basis, thereby creating a level field for all motor carriers statewide.

Terminal inspections have been conducted by the CHP since 1965 as a tool to determine motor carriers are complying with Motor Carrier Safety regulations on an on-going basis, particularly with regard to the legal requirement to maintain commercial motor vehicles according to a scheduled maintenance (preventive maintenance) program. Each motor carrier is permitted to establish his or her own maintenance program. The CHP's role is to determine whether carriers' selected maintenance schedules are adequate to prevent collisions or mechanical breakdowns involving the vehicles, and all required maintenance and driver records are prepared and retained as required by law. These same basic requirements are applied to all carriers, large and small.

Section 34501.12 of the California Vehicle Code (VC) requires any person or organization directing the operation of certain trucks and/or trailers to participate in the BIT Program. The law requires the CHP to inspect California truck terminals every 25 months.

Who is a "motor carrier" for purposes of the BIT Program?

A motor carrier subject to the BIT Program is the registered owner (with some exceptions) of any of the following vehicles, whether or not for hire:

- Any motortruck with three or more axles having a gross vehicle weight rating of more than 10,000 pounds.
- Truck tractors.
- Trailers or semitrailers used in combination with the vehicles listed above.
- Any truck, or combination of a truck and any other vehicle, transporting hazardous materials that require placards, a hazardous materials transportation license, or hazardous waste transporter registration, including pickups used for this purpose.
- Any motortruck with a gross vehicle weight rating of more than 10,000 pounds (excluding a pickup truck as defined in Section 471 VC), while towing any trailer or semitrailer that results in a combination length over 40 feet (excluding trailer coaches, camp trailers, and utility trailers, as those terms are defined in the Vehicle Code).

Exceptions:

- If the registered owner leases the vehicle to another person for a term greater than four months, the lessee is the motor carrier. The lessor and lessee must be identified on the vehicle registration (Section 4453.5 VC).
- If the registered owner operates the vehicle exclusively under the authority and direction of another person, that other person may assume the responsibilities as the motor carrier. If not so assumed in writing as specified in law, the registered owner is the motor carrier.

- The following vehicles are not subject to the BIT Program: historical vehicles as defined in Vehicle Code Section 5004, vehicles that display SE plates, and vehicles owned or operated by an agency of the federal government.

What is a "terminal" as defined in the BIT Program?

A terminal is any place where a vehicle described above is regularly garaged, maintained, operated or dispatched from, including a dispatch office, cross-dock facility, maintenance shop, business, store, or even a private residence. For purposes of BIT inspections, "terminal" means the location or locations in California that are designated by a motor carrier, where vehicles subject to the BIT program may be inspected by the CHP and where vehicle maintenance records and drivers' records will be made available for inspection (Section 34515 VC). A terminal inspection does *not* include inspection of any building or land, only vehicles and required records located there.

How does a person apply for a BIT inspection?

- All motor carriers in California are required by law to have a carrier identification number (CA number) from the CHP. If you or your company do not already have a CA number, you may obtain a CA number by completing a "Motor Carrier Profile" form CHP 362, and submitting it to the CHP. There is no charge for this number, but your BIT application, which does involve a fee, cannot be processed until you have a CA number to include on it. The CHP 362 may be obtained at any CHP office, or via the internet at: <http://www.chp.ca.gov/pdf/chp362.pdf>.
- Complete an "Application for Truck Terminal Inspection-BIT Program" form CHP 365. The CHP 365 may be obtained at any CHP office, or via the internet at: <http://www.chp.ca.gov/pdf/chp365.pdf>.
- The **initial** inspection fee for *each* terminal inspection is six hundred fifty dollars (\$650). The inspection fee for reinspections (if fees are required) and renewal inspections is four hundred dollars (\$400).
- For persons or companies who have only one terminal *and* operate not more than one power unit and not more than three towed vehicles of a type subject to the BIT Program, there is a reduced **initial** inspection fee of four hundred dollars (\$400). The reduced inspection fee for reinspections (if fees are required) and renewal inspections is one hundred dollars (\$100).
- State and local government agencies are exempt from the inspection fees, but must apply for and undergo BIT inspections. Federal agencies are exempt from the BIT Program.
- BIT inspection fees are non-refundable, and must **not** be combined with fees for any other program, license, or type of inspection.
- Make all checks or money orders payable to California Highway Patrol. **Do not send cash.** Make a copy of your application and keep it for your records. Credit card payments are possible through your local Motor Carrier Safety Unit. Discover and Visa/Mastercard are the only credit cards accepted at this time.
- Send the completed application along with a check or money order for the total amount of terminal inspection fees to:

**California Highway Patrol
Accounting Section — BIT Program
P.O. Box 942902
Sacramento, CA 94298-2902**

Periodic Inspections

Carriers who operate vehicles regulated under the BIT program are required to cause each regulated vehicle to be periodically inspected within 90-day intervals, or sooner if necessary to ensure safe operation. Inspections must be documented and inspection reports must be retained for at least two years. At a minimum, the following items need to be inspected:

- Brake adjustment.
- Brake system components and leaks.
- Steering and suspension systems.
- Tires and wheels.
- Vehicle connecting devices (fifth wheels, kingpins, pintle hooks, drawbars, chains, etc.).

Periodic inspection reports must include:

- Identification of the vehicle including, make, model, license number, company vehicle number or other means of positive identification.
- Date and nature of each inspection and repair performed.
- The signature of your authorized representative attesting to the inspection and to the completion of all required repairs.

The Inspection

During a BIT inspection, CHP Motor Carrier Specialist (MCS) personnel will inspect a sample of regulated vehicles, maintenance records of the vehicles, and driver records to determine if the motor carrier is in compliance with applicable motor carrier safety related statutes and regulations. If the motor carrier transports hazardous materials or hazardous waste, relevant hazardous materials records and safety practices will also be inspected.

MCS personnel do not issue citations for violations discovered. Instead, a safety compliance rating is assigned in each category: regulated vehicles, maintenance program, driver records, and hazardous materials (if applicable). The ratings are either "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory." A "conditional" rating may be issued under limited circumstances on reinspections.

If each category is rated satisfactory, the composite terminal rating is satisfactory, and the next inspection should take place within 25 months. If any category is rated unsatisfactory, the motor carrier is informed that there is an unsatisfactory condition, specific direction is given to correct the unsatisfactory condition, and a reinspection will be scheduled within 120 days to ensure the motor carrier has corrected the unsatisfactory condition.

NOTICE

This document is intended to give the general public an overview of BIT Program requirements, and is not intended to be used as a legal reference. While every effort to is made to ensure the accuracy of the information, the statutes explained herein are subject to change without notice.